

# Florida Today

Editorial

May 30, 2006

## Don't open ANWR

Arctic drilling no solution to high gas prices, energy crunch

The U.S. House tried again Thursday to hand Big Oil its long-term dream of exploiting the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, voting 225 to 201 to open parts of the preserve to drilling.

Proponents of drilling -- including Rep. Dave Weldon, R-Indianapolis, and Rep. Tom Feeney, R-Oviedo -- say doing so will reduce U.S. dependence on foreign oil and ease Americans' pain at the pump.

And they say it can be done without harming the refuge or its wildlife.

Both claims are bogus. The largest spill of crude oil ever recorded on Alaska's North Slope occurred just this March, with devastating environmental consequences, and spills are common.

There's less than a year's worth of fuel to be had from ANWR, the first drop wouldn't be sold for years, and even that probably would be shipped to closer markets such as Japan or China, not the lower 48 states.

House Science Committee Chairman Sherwood Boehlert, R-N.Y., who voted against drilling, pointed out a more realistic step towards energy independence: Stricter fuel-economy standards.

Had they been in place the 11 years since first proposed, more oil than the Arctic refuge can produce would already have been saved, says Boehlert.

He's pushing a proposal to set a minimum standard of 33 miles per gallon for new passenger cars, which we support.

Strong conservation measures -- teamed with aggressive development of biofuels and renewable energy sources -- is the way to reduce reliance on oil imports. Not drilling for a drop in the bucket under Alaskan tundra.